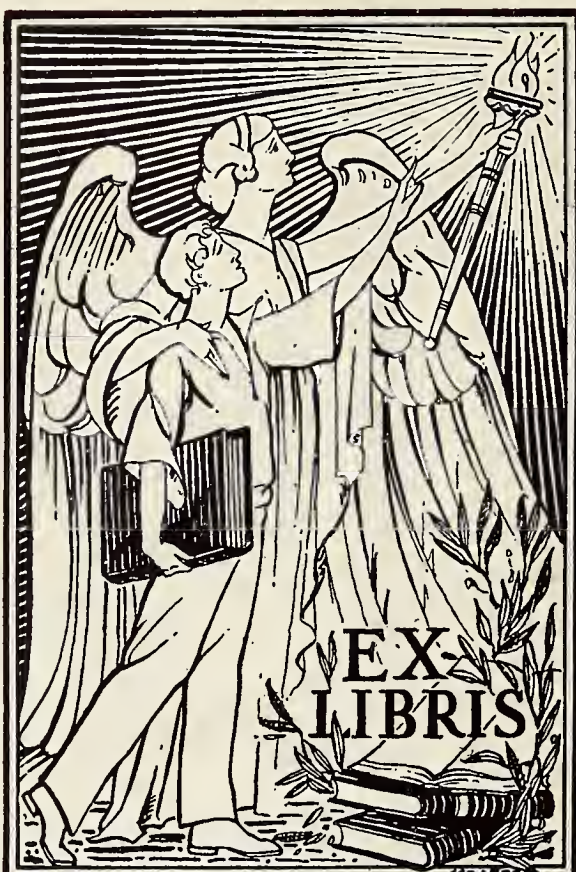


THE MENACE OF THE FIGURED VEIL

H. A. Bruce

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If you must wear a veil wear one with single, compact threads.

Veils

like the one above reduce the eye-strain to a minimum. The center veil is particularly injurious. It is almost im-

possible to arrange it without an opaque dot coming over the pupil of the eye. The other two figured veils shown here are "stylish," but if their wearers have any tendency to eye-weakness serious results will almost surely follow

The Menace of the Figured Veil

By H. Addington Bruce

SOME months ago a well-dressed, good-looking young woman of twenty-five was shown into the office of an eminent Boston eye-specialist. The strained, anxious expression on her face told him, the instant she lifted her veil, that she was in a highly nervous condition, and he was not in the least surprised when she said to him:

"Doctor, I have been sent to you because of the terrible sick headaches from which I have been suffering for nearly a year. I have tried all sorts of remedies, but nothing seems to do me any good. At first it was thought that indigestion was to blame, but no matter how faithfully I dieted, the attacks kept occurring. The other day my physician suggested that perhaps the trouble was with my eyes."

"You have not been to an oculist before, or worn glasses?"

"No, indeed," she replied, "I have not felt that I had any need to do so."

The specialist smiled, and began the work of examination. When he had completed the various tests, he said to the young woman, with grave earnestness:

"My dear young lady, you would not only be helped by glasses, but you need them very badly. You say it was a year ago that you began to suffer from headache?"

"Yes."

"And was it about a year ago that you began wearing heavily figured veils of the extremely fashionable and artistic type with which you are adorned today?"

The young woman stared at him in amazement. "Why, whatever do you mean? What can my veil have to do with it?"

"Possibly a good deal. Almost certainly so, if you have been wearing veils like this with any frequency for a considerable length of time."

His patient, still staring, made reply: "As it happens, I have. I started motoring about a year and a half ago, and I have been using my car a great deal, with the idea that being out in the open would help cure my headaches. Naturally I have worn a veil, and usually a figured one."

"I suspected as much," said the physician, taking up his prescription pad. "What you must do is to wear glasses made according to the prescription I am going to give you. Then discard all veils like the one you now have on. When motoring, or on any other occasion that you feel you need a veil, wear only a plain mesh one. The trouble is that you have had all along a slight visual defect, and the effort involved in constantly looking through a figured veil has accentuated this until you have become a true victim of eye-strain, the chief symptom of which has in your case taken the form of severe headaches. Follow my advice, and before very long your headaches will entirely cease."

This prediction was strikingly fulfilled.

Now, it would be a gross exaggeration to say that episodes like this are of every-day occurrence in the consulting-rooms of eye-specialists, but they are occurring with sufficient frequency to warrant some serious words of warning to all wearers of veils. And they would occur with far greater frequency were the menace of the figured veil appreciated as it ought to be by the oculists and ophthal-



This veil was purchased in June at an exclusive New York store. Its wearer probably has headaches or is "nervous" now—and doesn't know why

mologists of our country. The fact of the matter is that up to the present comparatively few eye specialists have made a close study of the effect of veils on the eyesight. Those, however, who have made a careful investigation are unanimous in affirming that certain types of veil, more particularly the heavily dotted or "lace-curtain" veils so much in vogue today, are prolific sources of evil.

Nor are the specialists holding this belief "faddists" or obscure practitioners seeking to obtain cheap notoriety by fathering novel and sensational theories. On the contrary, they are men in the very forefront of the profession and fame throughout the ophthalmic world for their mastery of the delicate problems with which they have to deal. The base their verdict against the veil partly on observation of the results attending withdrawal or modification of the veils worn by their patients, partly on statements volunteered

by patients themselves, and partly on experiments showing conclusively the influence exercised by veils in interfering adversely with the visual apparatus, and hence making for eye-strain with all its resultant evils of headache, insomnia, indigestion, and the host of other "reflex neuroses" to which it may give rise.

For example, Dr. Casey A. Wood, former president of the American Academy of Medicine, and one of the best-known ophthalmologists in the United States, in a most interesting series of experiments took a young woman of excellent eyesight and tested the effects produced on her visual power by a dozen veils of different weave and design ranging from veils of the plainest character

to elaborately patterned veils of the ultra-fashionable type. The result in the case of many of the veils was so striking as to

ability the subject of Dr. Wood's experiments possessed—but not when wearing a veil.

The first veil she put on—a

As effective as a Turkish veil in concealing beauty; but is

astonish even the experimenter himself, and satisfy him of the great importance of recognizing the veil as a potential cause of eye-troubles.

According to the standards established by ophthalmic practice, a person of absolutely normal vision ought to be able to perceive clearly, with each eye separately, bold-faced type, a quarter of an inch square, at a distance of twenty feet; and ought also to be able to read with ease the finest print (diamond) at a distance of ten to fourteen inches. This twofold

such a disguise beautiful? It certainly is harmful

fine black net, having small black dots two inches apart and white flower sprays three inches apart, the dots being one-sixteenth of an inch in diameter—reduced her far vision fully one-third, and affected her near vision so that she could not read any but a fair-sized print if a dot in the veil happened to be in front of the pupil of her eye. A second veil—a black, dotted, double-thread net one, the dots being a quarter of an inch in diameter, and nine to the square inch—brought her



Worn in the
wearer is no

name of beauty! Presumably the
more blind than the design makes her

far vision down to two-fifths of normal, and made it impossible for her to read even ordinary book print.

Exactly the same result was recorded, so far as concerned far vision, with a white Brussels net lace veil having flower sprays four inches apart. But in this instance, while diamond type became unreadable, the next larger size could, by an effort, be read.



A thin chiffon veil is not injurious to the eyes, and gives all the protection needed

A white, double-thread net veil, with four black dots to the square inch, brought far vision two-fifths below normal, and blurred book print. Less "irritating," but still showing marked interference with vision, was a black Brussels net, with nine pin-head dots to the square inch. This veil reduced far vision one-fourth, and blurred fine print.



Whether veils with elaborate lace patterns are allowed to fall free or are fastened securely at the back, the effect on the eyes is equally bad

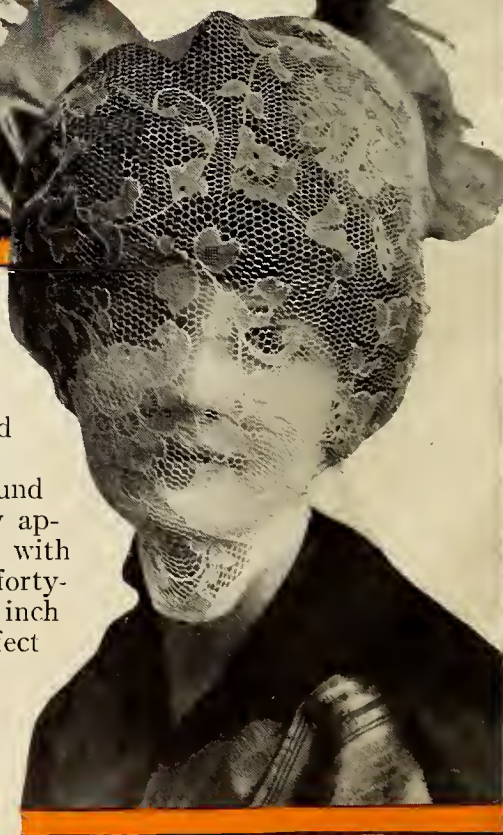
On the other hand, certain kinds of veils were found to affect the visual power only to a small, scarcely appreciable, extent. This was particularly the case with a single thread, square-mesh net veil having forty-eight meshes to the square inch and one-eighth inch dots that were one and a half inches apart. Its effect on both far and near vision was of the slightest. So with a veil of the same general description, but having somewhat larger dots; the vision was markedly lowered only when a dot was in front of the pupil. The same effect was noticed in the case of a single-thread, chenille dot, black fish-

net veil, sixteen meshes and sixteen dots to the square inch.

In short, Dr. Wood's experiments led him to the conclusion that while all veils affect the visual power more or less, the most objectionable is the heavily dotted or figured veil, and the least objectionable is one that without dots, sprays, or other figures, but with large, regular meshes made with single, compact threads. With this opinion other ophthalmologists are in substantial agreement. To quote one of them, Dr. Walter L. Pyle, of Philadelphia:

"Thick or dotted veils are the ones most likely to cause deterioration of vision. These articles are often necessary to protect the face, to keep the hair smooth, or to maintain headgear in position. In such cases a thin veil with a very large mesh will answer all these purposes without interfering with vision."

Unfortunately, esthetic considerations and the dictates of fashion have cooperated to win chief favor for precisely the veils that the eye-specialist condemns. The dotted or figured veil is certainly prettier



veil than a plain, open-meshed one, and when fashion says, "Wear lace-curtain veils," lace-curtain veils it must be, at any rate for those whose purses can stand the strain of the costly Parisian creations. The more "smart" and "artistic" the veil, too, the more frequently it is sure to be worn; with the result, when reading is attempted in street-car, railway-train, church, or other place of public resort, of putting an ever-heavier burden on eyes already severely taxed by the mere gazing through the patterned veil.

The effect, at all events on those whose eyesight is naturally somewhat below normal, is almost certain to be serious, perhaps disastrous. And the trouble is that an amazingly large number of people are thus handicapped by sub-normal visual power, some authorities going so far as to declare, with the eminent Dr. Roosa, that the apparatus of the eye is very rarely in a perfectly normal condition. Moreover, statistics go to show that women are far more liable than men to suffer from eye defects of such a character as to call for medical intervention. Dr. George M. Gould, the well-known authority on eye-strain, reports that among three thousand patients 76 per cent were women and only 24 per cent men. For a thousand cases treated by Dr. F. W. Marlow the percentages were 64 for women and 36 for men. Dr. W. F. Southard, reporting on thirteen hundred cases, gives a 69 per centage for women and 31 for men.

Doubtless this greater susceptibility of women to eye troubles is largely accounted for by the fact that women as a rule are at an early age taught to sew, and throughout life do all sorts of needlework requiring the frequent and effortful use of the eyes at close

range. But in the light of experiments like those conducted by Dr. Wood and the observations of other ophthalmologists, a good part of the blame must be ascribed to their habit of wearing veils, especially when the veils worn are of the heavily dotted or figured variety, and when they are worn over-frequently by women of naturally sub-normal visual power. It is this that constitutes the great danger of the figured veil.

As was said to me by the Boston specialist referred to in my opening paragraphs:

"Whenever I am asked, 'Do veils cause eye troubles?' I am tempted to reply, 'Do street-cars run on Washington Street?' But just as certain lines of cars run more frequently on Washington Street than others do, so certain kinds of veils are more harmful than others. And even the most unhygienic of veils, unless worn to great excess, will do little or no damage to absolutely normal eyes, which always have great recuperative powers. Unluckily, many people are constitutionally afflicted with some degree of ocular irregularity. Their eyes may be astigmatic, myopic (near-sighted), or hypermetropic (far-sighted).

"In such cases it often happens that they get along well enough without glasses, and without experiencing any marked discomfort, until they subject themselves to conditions that overtax the accommodative power of their already defective eyes. If they are women, and if they get into the habit of wearing veils of the vision-interfering sort, they have provided for themselves just such a disease-developing condition. In time they are likely to experience one or more of the characteristic symptoms of eye-strain.



A typical "lace curtain" veil. The verdict concerning it is, "Don't!"



Mother Goose Series—Drawing by Jessie Willcox Smith.

Rock-a-bye Baby, *On the Tree-Top,*
When the *Wind* Blows, the Cradle *will Rock.*

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Bruce, H. A.

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